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## Eggner Ferry Bridge collapse presses area conservation officers into action

**I**was picturing vehicles and people in the water,” said 15-year veteran Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Resources conservation officer **Denny Broyles** of Hickman County upon hearing a news report that the Eggner Ferry Bridge had collapsed. “It was dark and raining, and I just knew it was not going to be good.”

Almost home on his return trip from Frankfort, he immediately contacted conservation officers in the area who confirmed from local sheriff’s deputies just arriving at the bridge that indeed two spans of the U.S. 68/KY 80 bridge over Kentucky Lake in far western Kentucky had collapsed after being struck by a barge late Thursday night.

Without knowing any more, Broyles quickly sent officers to the collapsed bridge with boats and rescue equipment. In the next 24 hours, six additional conservation officers would assist various state and federal officials at the scene.

“There’s no hesitation in circumstances like this,” said **Major Larry Estes**. “This

situation was potentially life threatening, and people look to us for help.”

In his career Broyles has helped people flooded out of their homes, stranded without power due to ice storms, and he even deployed in 2005 to provide rescue and relief to New Orleans residents devastated

by Hurricane Katrina, but he says the collapsed bridge was a new experience for him.

“This was my first shipwreck,” he said. “The first news report spoke of a barge strike. I’ve never seen a boat that big on

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## WE GET MAIL

### *Letters to the Commissioner's Office*

This note comes from Chuck Juengling. "Thank you for the new courtesy dock walkway that you have installed at Taylorsville Lake Settlers Trace boat ramp. It is now much safer than it was previously and can also be used during moderately high water conditions. It is much improved and I appreciate your efforts – as will others who use this facility. Nice job. Keep up the good work."

We recently received a letter from Eric Shrader who is one of our Hunter Education Instructors. He wrote, "This is to thank you (Commissioner Gassett), and your Wildlife Conservation Officers who recently provided some exemplary assistance."

During the last part of January, I taught a Hunter Education Course here in Breckinridge County. Wildlife Conservation Officers **Jason Ice**, **Rodney Milburn** and **Sgt. Scott Herndon** attended the course on Friday night and provided input to the class, answered questions, and Sgt. Herndon taught a portion of the classes on trapping. Their participation, interaction with the students, and professional demeanor added much to the class and greatly helped to ensure a positive outcome.

Each of these officers is to be commended for their exceptional level of customer care and service oriented assistance rendered. They all exemplified the sincere dedication, positive attitudes, and professionalism that is demanding of recognition. Kentucky Fish & Wildlife is fortunate to have these professionals as part of the team.

Thank you, and please convey my appreciation to each of the aforementioned Conservation Officers. "

## New Hires

**Andy Redden** has recently been hired as a Fish and Wildlife Technician III at the Peter W. Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery in Frankfort. Andy has an Associate of applied science in fish and wildlife management and aquaculture from Hocking College in Nelsonville, Ohio, a Bachelor's in secondary education (biology), and a Master's in aquatic science and aquaculture both from Kentucky State University in Frankfort.

Andy lives in Owen County where he takes care of many farm ponds of his own. He worked as a seasonal technician at the hatchery in 2011. He has worked at several other hatcheries and has a great deal of knowledge about aquaculture.

Andy will be the primary caretaker for the lake sturgeon and alligator gar being reared at the hatchery. He will also share in the everyday operations at the hatchery. We would like to welcome him to the department.

**Luke Carter** recently came on board as a Technician II at our Ballard WMA. Luke comes from Ballard County. Once graduating from Ballard Memorial High School he attended Murray State University where he attained a BS in Agriculture Systems Technology. Luke also attended West KY Technical College to complete his Associates in Applied Science and Welding/Pipeline. Luke has worked with us as an interim at Ballard and has about 14 years experience working at Bluff Acres Hunt Club.

The Wildlife Diversity Section's Center for Mollusk Conservation in Frankfort has three new employees that started in early February 2012. These include a Fisheries Biologist III (**Dr. Christopher Owen**), Fisheries Biologist II (**Travis Bailey**), and a Fish and Wildlife Technician II (**Andrew McDonald**). All individuals have been associated with the Kentucky State University Aquaculture Program.

Christopher Owen is a native of Ohio and has been living in Kentucky since 2004.

He earned a B.A. and M.S. in Biology both with a focus on aquatic ecology at Wright State University in 2001 and 2004. He went on to earn a Ph.D. in Biology with a focus on malacology and aquatic ecology in 2009. Christopher is coming to KDFWR from a research position as a post-doctoral fellow at Kentucky State University studying aquaculture and in vitro mussel culture techniques with threatened and endangered mussel species. Christopher is an avid football fan and enjoys playing golf. His other pastimes include boating, hunting, fishing, photography, chess and reading. Christopher lives in Louisville with his wife, Erin, and three dogs. He and Erin are expecting their first child this coming March. Dr. Owen will be heading up the artificial culture of freshwater mussels in the Center's new lab, which is scheduled to open in early spring 2012.

Travis Bailey is a native of Owen County. He received his B.S. degree from Morehead State University in Animal Science and his M.S. degree from Kentucky State University in Aquatic Science/Aquaculture. He started volunteering at the Center for Mollusk Conservation in 2009 and was hired on as a Seasonal Technician in November 2009. In 2010 he was hired on full time as a Fisheries Technician II and recently was hired in the Fisheries Biologist II position in 2012. Travis is overseeing the fat pocketbook culture and propagation at the Center. Travis enjoys fishing and hunting and playing Frisbee golf.

Andy McDonald is a native of Maryland. He received his B.S. degree in 2006 from St. Mary's College of Maryland in Math & Environmental Studies and his M.S. degree in 2011 from Kentucky State University in Aquaculture (specifically working with juvenile mussel diets). He started at the Center as seasonal technician in 2011 and recently received the Fish

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## “Hires,” continued

Tech II position in 2012. Andy worked at a marine oyster farm in Maryland prior to coming to Kentucky and brings valuable insight from the marine bivalve culture industry. Andy enjoys playing ultimate Frisbee, hunting, and gardening. Andy and his wife Katie live in Frankfort.

If you have questions about the Center for Mollusk Conservation or for the new staff, you can contact them at (502) 573-0330.

### KDFWR Academy Class 17

January 17, 2012 saw the beginning of the KDFWR Law Enforcement Academy Class 17. Let's take a moment to briefly get to know the recruits that make up this latest academy class.

Assigned to Fulton County is **Zachary Brooks**. Brooks graduated from Southern Illinois University in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in Administration of Justice. After college he worked as a correctional officer in Missouri before being hired with KDFWR as a wildlife technician.

Going to Clinton County is **Bryan Dolan**. Dolan holds an associates degree from Somerset Community College which he earned in 2007. The next year Dolan began his career with KDFWR in the wildlife division.

Trimble County will be receiving recruit **Jason Fitzgerald**. Fitzgerald was a dairy farmer for 6 years before employment with the Luther Lockett Correctional Complex for 1 year. From there he went to the KDFWR Fisheries Division. Fitzgerald is married with two young children.

Recruit **Tim Humble**, from West Liberty, is assigned to Livingston County. Humble attended Lees College for two years, and then began his law enforcement career with Breathitt County Sheriff's Department in 2000. Afterwards he moved to Richmond and was employed by Richmond PD and then Madison County Sheriff's Department.

Assigned to Carroll County is **Stephen Jenkins IV**. Jenkins went to ECU where he studied police studies. He

worked for four summers as a camp counselor for the KDFWR and is currently engaged to Sarah Hill.

Going to Meade County is **Todd Johnson** from Shepherdsville. Johnson began his career in law enforcement in 2000 with Taylorsville PD before transferring to Shepherdsville PD where he spent 11 years. Johnson has one eleven year old son.

The second district will be receiving **Todd Jones** who is assigned to work Union County. Jones graduated from ECU in 1988 with a bachelors degree in Police Administration. For the next 23 years Jones worked for KSP and retired in 2011 as a Detective Sergeant. Jones has been married for 21 years and has two sons.

Recruit **Barry Norton** is heading to Oldham County in the third district. Norton comes from the Oldham County Sheriff's Department, and has been married for the past 20 years with three children.

Assigned to Boyd County is recruit

**Bradley Stafford**. Stafford graduated from Kentucky Christian University in 2011 where he had dual majors in university studies and biblical studies. While at school Stafford played four years of college football and is planning to be married this fall. After graduation Stafford worked for the U.S. Forest Service.

Recruit **Lucas Tucker** is assigned to Rockcastle County, and is from Pulaski County. Tucker spent four years in the United States Marine Corps and afterwards took a job with an electrical contracting company. Recruit Tucker is married and has two children.

Last but not least is recruit **Ricky Warf**. Warf is from Letcher County and is going to be working Bath County. In 2010 Warf received an associate's degree from Southeast Community and Technical College. From there he continued his education at ECU pursuing a bachelors degree in criminal justice.



Above: Conservation officers hosted another youth waterfowl hunt at the Popo Hole in Ballard County. Joining Officer Tony Dunker (right) were David Knight and son D.J. Knight, and Kevin Lynn (kneeling) and son Zack Swinord.

Right: Dayna Dunker is joined by her cousin Jarrett Oldham during the hunt.

## YOUTH WATERFOWL HUNT



Nick Keeton thins cedar trees around oak saplings. *Dan Stoelb photo*



Stockpile of cedar trees for installation. *Dan Stoelb photo*



## Fisheries and Wildlife divisions partner for large habitat effort on Green River Lake WMA

**T**he Fisheries and Wildlife Divisions recently partnered together on habitat enhancement efforts at Green River Lake WMA in Taylor and Adair counties.

This large group effort involved approximately 15-20 people daily from various sections within the department from January 23-26. The goal of the habitat effort was to complete forestland management practices on the Green River Lake WMA and utilize the material for fisheries habitat enhancement within the lake.

The first two days involved a forestland management method known as Forest Stand Improvement (FSI). "Forest Stand Improvement is the process of cutting selected trees within a dense stand to promote growth of other trees.

Benefits of FSI can be increased tree growth, understory growth, reduced insect infestation risk, and increased diversity of forest birds. Forest stands selected for thinning were various cedar thickets around Green River Lake WMA that were adjacent to the lake shore.

Efforts were made to release oak, dogwood, and persimmon that were being outcompeted by cedars, according to Southeast Region wildlife biologist **Brian**

Ryan Oster and Dan Stoelb use the Habitat Barge to sink pallet structures. *Joseph Zimmerman photo*



**Gray.** Material not utilized for fisheries habitat was situated in large piles to provide refuge for birds, small mammals and reptiles.

The final two days involved sinking of cedar trees and pallet structures throughout areas of Green River Lake. A total of 291 cedar trees and 146 pallet structures

were added during the four-day effort.

Areas selected ranged from 10-18 feet below summer pool in both the Green River and Robinson Creek arms of the lake. Specific areas targeted were mid-upper Butler Creek, Corbin's Bend, State Park Camp-

**See "Habitat," page 5**

## Golden eagle survey

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources began participation in a multistate cooperative golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) survey project in collaboration with the Eastern Golden Eagle Working Group in 2012.

Photo “capture” sites were monitored for golden eagle and other wildlife use using surveillance cameras on the Fish-trap Lake WMA, Grayson Lake WMA, Pioneer Weapons WMA, Yatesville Lake WMA and Yellowbank WMA.

Approximately a dozen states are participating in this survey effort with hopes of gaining a better understanding of golden eagle distribution and migration routes in the eastern United States. The camera sites are baited with roadkill deer and monitored for an extended period of time.

Golden eagles have been detected at the Pioneer Weapons WMA (Bath County) and Fishtrap Lake WMA (Pike County). Bald eagles have been detected at the Pioneer Weapons WMA, Grayson Lake WMA (Carter County), and the Yellowbank WMA (Breckinridge County).



A golden eagle from the Pioneer Weapons WMA walks past the camera while an immature bald eagle arrives in the background.  
*Steve Bonney trail camera photo*



Golden eagle at Fishtrap Lake WMA.

### “Habitat,” continued

ground, Goat Island and Smith Ridge.

Southwest District fisheries biologist **Eric Cummins** said, “The sites we targeted were barren flats and near shore drop offs that lacked structure or cover of any kind. The habitat we’ve added will attract the lake’s most sought after fishes (crappie, bass and muskie) to areas they likely used infrequently due to the lack of habitat.”

Cedar trees were harvested from the forest management activities on the WMA. Pallets were donated by Best Made

Pallets, LLC in Shepherdsville, Kentucky. The structures will provide refuge, food, and spawning habitat for sunfish, crappie, bass and catfish.

Periphyton will eventually colonize the structures and provide food for fishes. Other benefits of the structures are increased angler catch rates. The majority of structures placed in the lake were marked with GPS coordinates. Maps of the habitat structures will be made available to the public through the KDFWR website.

The Green River Lake habitat effort was a great partnership between the

Fisheries and Wildlife Divisions of the KDFWR in cooperation with the Green River Lake U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

It is just another example of KDFWR’s ongoing efforts to conserve and enhance fish and wildlife resources and provide increased sportsman satisfaction in Kentucky. The Environmental Section will be assisting the Fisheries Districts with coordinating similar projects statewide for major reservoirs and state owned lakes.

For more information, contact Joseph Zimmerman in the Environmental Section at 502-564-3400 extension 4473.

## Palmer Road (Salt River) bank fishing access update

This winter has been mild so far, to say the least. Soon it will be spring and with it the official arrival of the 2012 fishing season.

Throughout many parts of Kentucky, one of the earliest prime fisheries is provided by white bass populations as they migrate up major tributary and creek arms in reservoirs and rivers as part of their spawning runs.

For those anglers residing within the Bluegrass Region, a tremendous white bass spawning run occurs in the Salt River just above Taylorsville Lake in Anderson County.

The Palmer Road parking area, located on the Taylorsville Lake WMA, offers bank anglers a convenient location to access spawning white bass in the Salt River. Past efforts by the Wildlife, Engineering, and Fisheries Divisions has improved access to the area by creating a larger, paved parking area and more accommodating roadway accessing the site.

In an attempt to further improve the area, cooperative efforts between these three divisions have helped fund additional work to allow anglers even closer access to a wider section of the Salt River.

Contractors are currently on-site making improvements to 11 drainage



Contractors work to add a concrete pad across one of 11 drainage crossings in order to improve vehicular access for bank anglers at the Salt River.

crossings that will allow anglers to drive their vehicles closer to additional parking areas created near the Salt River. As of February 10, the contractor had completed work on three of 11 drainage crossings.

In addition to the drainage crossings, two additional parking areas are being created at the upper and lower sections of the Salt River. These two areas will accommodate anglers by allowing them to park in separate areas depending upon the location of the spawning white bass run.

The Fisheries Division would like to thank Taylorsville Lake WMA Foreman **Bill Mitchell**, and staff from the Engineering Division for their assistance and spear-heading of this effort to improve bank fishing access in Kentucky.

Barring any major weather delay, we hope to be able to highlight the completion of this project in next month's Commissioner's Newsletter, and just in time for the 2012 white bass run.

### "Bridge," continued

Kentucky Lake – never!"

Conservation officers joining Broyles in search and rescue operations and in assisting the Coast Guard and Kentucky Department of Transportation were **Sergeant James Nason**, and officers **Daniel Richardson**, **Josh Hudson**, **Kyle Webb**, **Lee Cope** and **Greg Youree**.

News reports later said the 312-foot Delta Mariner carrying aviation parts was traveling downstream toward Kentucky Dam. It apparently attempted to pass

under the bridge in the wrong channel. Clearance beneath the bridge was inadequate, according to news reports, and the boat struck the steel truss bridge, stripping it off its piers. About 300 feet of steel span and asphalt pavement fell, much of it folding across the boat's bow. The rest of the span burrowed into the muddy lake bottom, anchoring the boat at the spot.

Traffic across the Kentucky Lake span averages about 2,800 vehicles daily. After searching for several hours, officers and rescue personnel were satisfied that they had somehow dodged a major bullet – no

vehicles or people were involved in the incident.

And with that realization, the role of fish and wildlife officers evolved. "Once we determined there were no vehicles or people in the water, our mission turned into one of support for those who have the responsibility – the U.S. Coast Guard and Kentucky Department of Transportation," said Broyles. "The Coast Guard shut the river down to commercial traffic for about a two-mile stretch. We assisted them in maintaining a safe zone around the bridge and vessel."

## Fisheries holds annual staff meeting

The Fisheries Division recently held its annual staff meeting at Lake Cumberland State Park on February 7-9, 2012. The meeting proved an excellent opportunity for staff from all parts of Kentucky to meet and discuss pressing fisheries issues, as well as meet new employees.

The meeting started off with a general overview of department, division, and personnel updates from Director **Ron Brooks**. He then delved into a variety of topics including updates on aquatic nuisance species, new regulation changes, and Town Hall meeting updates.

Assistant Directors **Gerry Buynak**, **Mike Hardin** and **Jeff Ross** continued the meeting with discussions around research, district, fish hatcheries, and transportation issues.

Following a general overview by the executive staff, many presentations were made by Fisheries staff including:

- (1) State Wildlife Grant project updates: **Matt Thomas**
- (2) Fish habitat enhancement project updates: **Joseph Zimmerman**
- (3) FILO project updates: **Andy Mowrey**
- (4) VPA updates: **Kerry Prather**
- (5) Pfeiffer Hatchery renovation update: **Steve Marple**
- (6) Southern Division of AFS meeting update: **Neal Jackson / Jeremy Shiflet**
- (7) FINS program update: **Dane Balsman**
- (8) Capital projects and access updates: **Ryan Oster**
- (9) Lake Sturgeon telemetry update: **Sara Tripp**
- (10) New stream research updates: **Sara Tripp**
- (11) Kentucky and Barkley Lakes crappie update: **Paul Rister**
- (12) Beaver Lake management update: **Jeff Crosby**
- (13) Lake Cumberland striped bass update: **John Williams**

Following the staff meeting, the group convened into the annual Ken-

tucky Chapter of the American Fisheries Society meeting. Six oral presentations were provided by Departmental staff with an additional four presentations provided by students and faculty from Murray State and Western Kentucky Universities.

All presentations were outstanding and the best student paper was awarded to Adam Martin and Dr. Michael Flinn of Murray State University for their presentation titled, "Recruitment of crappie populations in Kentucky Lake." The runner-up student presentation went to Jared Militello and Dr. Michael Flinn for their presentation titled, "Movement, habitat use, and diet selectivity of re-introduced juvenile alligator gar in the Clarks River, Kentucky."

The Chapter meeting was honored to have in attendance the President of the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society, Dr. Brian Murphy. Dr. Murphy is a Professor of Fisheries at Virginia Tech University.

Murphy blessed the group with an outstanding presentation on water resources management and usage in China and how it's developing economy will most likely play a major global part in future water resources issues in the years to come. Following his presentation, he provided a brief update on issues and topics in the Southern Division.

Although the meeting covered a lot of business topics, staff were able to relax and socialize over a meal on Wednesday evening. Following the meal, good times were had by all as people took part in the annual Fisheries Division corn-hole tournament, as well as a competitive game of Spades.

This year's Fisheries Division corn-hole champions were **Danny "BIG-D" Parks** and **Brian Murphy**. Congratulations are also in order to **Rob "Sand-Bagger" Rold** and **Ryan "Money Man" Oster** for each winning a game of Spades throughout the course of the evening.



The Fisheries Division listens to updates by Director Ron Brooks as the first item on the agenda.  
*Jeff Ross photo*

## Furbearer program, Auburn University and Bernheim Forest partner on bobcat research

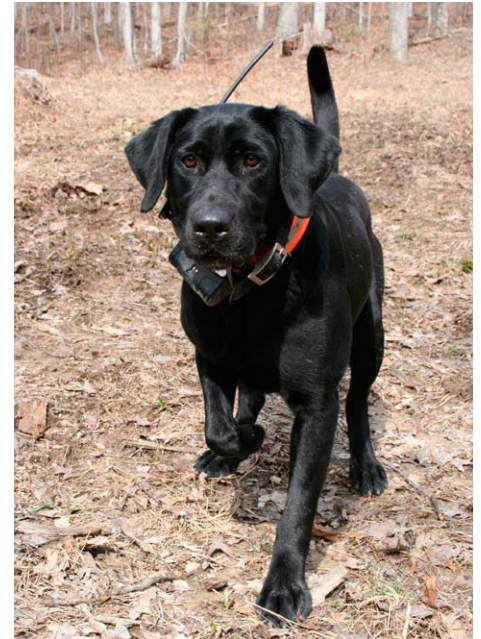
**K**DFWR's furbearer program partnered with Auburn University's Animal Health and Performance Program and Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest to collect initial data for a Kentucky-specific bobcat density project.

Field collection of bobcat scat, using Auburn's scat-detection dogs, occurred on Bernheim Forest and on Green River Wildlife Management Area. Collected scat will be subject to genetic analysis in the upcoming months to determine the

number of individual bobcats detected within each study site, and to model population size on each area.

The purpose of this study is to obtain bobcat density estimates which will be used to enhance management of bobcats within Kentucky.

Kasey, part of Auburn's Eco-Dog Team, is rewarded with play time when she detects bobcat scat. *Bryan Tom photo, Auburn University*



## Minor Clark Fish Hatchery Mentor/Mobility-Impaired Hatchery Hunts

**M**entor/Mobility-impaired quota waterfowl hunts were held each weekend day during January at the Minor Clark Fish Hatchery in Rowan County.

This is a cooperative effort between Wildlife Division and Fisheries Division

Hatchery staff.

Hunters apply in advance for a chance at one of five blinds strategically placed throughout the Hatchery rearing pond area. Mild weather across the country this year contributed to some unusually slow

hunting at times this season, but 96 youth and mentors participated this year.

Twenty-one geese and two ducks were taken. Not everyone took waterfowl, but everyone who participated took home plenty of memories.



Above: Matt Elkins, Greg Elkins, Michael Russell and Ethan Russell teamed up for some excellent goose hunting on the last day of the hunts.

Above right: Persistence paid off for Josh Young, Will Bacon, Lucy Bacon, Ruben Bacon, and camera shy Finn.